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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RICHARD BURR, a Senator from the State of North Carolina.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray:

O God, who unites us with Your love, order our steps. May no passing irritation rob us of our appreciation for others. Keep us patient regarding human failings; permit us to see Your image in our world.

Use our Senators to accomplish Your purposes. Give them wisdom to avoid majoring in minors or minoring in majors. As they offer You their best, give them Your abundant blessings. Give us all generous hearts and use us to bless Your world.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable RICHARD BURR led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The bill clerk read the following letter.

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 26, 2006.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RICHARD BURR, a Senator from the State of North Carolina, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BURR thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today, we will be in morning business with time equally divided until 4 p.m. At 4, we will begin consideration of the resolution to prevent flag desecration. Chairman SPECTER will be here this afternoon for a period of debate only on that resolution.

As previously announced, there won't be any votes during today's session. But Senators are encouraged to come to the floor and speak if they would like.

The next rollcall vote will occur tomorrow, and we will notify Senators when the vote is scheduled.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business until 4 p.m., with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is my understanding that leader time is reserved; is that right?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

IRAQ RECONCILIATION PLAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, here is the lead sentence from an article in this day's New York Times. This headline also appeared in other newspapers around the country. It ran under the headline of "U.S. General in Iraq Outlines Troop Cuts."

Mr. President, I think this first paragraph says most of it:

The top American commander in Iraq has drafted a plan that projects sharp reductions in the United States military presence there by the end of 2007, with the first cuts coming this September, American officials say.

This, of course, we have learned came from General Casey. This announcement from our military was one piece of good news for those of us who believe we need a new course in Iraq. But it was not the only good news we received this weekend regarding Iraq.

Another encouraging sign came from Baghdad itself where the Prime Minister believes it is also the time to start thinking about the withdrawal of United States troops. Together, these reports—one from General Casey, the one on the chart, and the other from Prime Minister Maliki—provided a glimmer of hope for those of us who have been demanding a new direction in the war in Iraq, a change of course.

This afternoon, I want to note the similarity between General Casey's apparent plan to withdraw U.S. forces and the plan put forth by Senate Democrats on this floor last week with the Defense authorization bill. Our plan, designed by Senators LEVIN and REED, is very much like this program shown on the chart. That is by our commanding general in Iraq. It said much the same thing as our military leaders are saying all over the country, specifically through General Casey, specifically, that it is time for the Iraqis to take responsibility for their

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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